

**MCPB
Item #
5-1-2008**

Date: April 25, 2008
To: Montgomery County Planning Board
VIA: Dan Hardy, Acting Transportation Planning Chief
From: Shahriar Etemadi, Transportation Planning
Subject: BRAC Final Environmental Impact Statement Evaluation

Staff's Review and Discussion

The Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) for the National Naval Medical Center (NNMC) in Bethesda, Maryland establishes the potential environmental impacts of relocating major functions of the Walter Reed Army Medical Center from Washington, DC to the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland.

The BRAC FEIS was released on April 4, 2008, kicking off a 30-day Wait Period prior to publication of the Record of Decision (ROD), which is anticipated to be published on or about May 5, 2008. The ROD is expected to formalize the recommendations contained in the FEIS, which were developed based on extensive interagency and public coordination.

The FEIS makes specific recommendations regarding the selection of Alternative One as the Preferred Alternative. The FEIS also identifies further federal and state procedures to implement the on-base improvements and actions to mitigate adverse impacts. While the FEIS does not contain a specific response to the Planning Board's request for future mandatory referral submissions, we have a process to stay informed of the separate on-site implementation activities and off-site improvement studies, we will keep the Planning Board apprised of the BRAC progress and informed of any decision points.

Staff proposes that the Chairman transmit the correspondence included as Attachment A to this memorandum.

Both Chairman Hanson and senior staff have been actively participating in Montgomery County's BRAC Implementation Committee (BIC) during the EIS process. The BIC transmitted its comments on the FEIS to County Executive Leggett on April 16, 2008; these comments are included as Attachment B to this memorandum.

Prior Planning Board and County Council Actions

The DEIS was reviewed by the Planning Board in a Public Hearing on January 10, 2008. The Board transmitted staff's recommendations under cover of a letter from Chairman Hanson, included as Attachment C. On January 14, 2008, Chairman Hanson and staff briefed the County Council on our findings and recommendations. The County Council endorsed the Board's recommendations.

Background

The BRAC realignment impacting Montgomery County derives from the transfer of multiple medical functions from the Walter Reed Army Hospital Complex to the Bethesda Naval Medical Center, creating the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC) at Bethesda. The BRAC law calls for completion of the merger, establishment of the WRNMMC, and closure of Walter Reed to be accomplished by September 15, 2011. This combined center is to serve as the premier Department of Defense medical center that includes specialized facilities for the most seriously injured service members, as well as ongoing services to veterans and military retirees. It will serve as the American military's "*worldwide tertiary referral center for casualty and beneficiary care.*" That stated intent in this merger is to permit the joint military Services to "efficiently consolidate and utilize available health care resources and personnel."

Current Status

The FEIS was released on April 4th and on that day, a 30-day Wait Period (no action period) has begun. Comments received during the FEIS 30-day Wait Period (no action period) will be considered in reaching the final decision on the proposed action. Following the 30-day Wait Period (no action period), a Record of Decision (ROD) will be prepared and published in the Federal Register. The ROD is a concise summary of the decision made by the Secretary of the Navy (or his designee) from the alternatives presented in an FEIS. The ROD will state the decision regarding the alternative selected for implementation.

Alternative One has been identified as the Preferred Alternative in the FEIS that would add approximately 1,144,000 square feet (SF) of new building construction, provide approximately 508,000 SF of renovation to existing building space at NNMC, and provide approximately 824,000 SF of new parking facilities (or nearly 2,500 new parking spaces). The primary difference between Alternative One and Alternative Two relates to site layout.

Approximately 12.2 acres (8.8 acres of construction on existing Final Environmental Impact Statement National Naval Medical Center ES-8 impermeable surfaces requiring demolition and 3.4 acres of new construction on open space) under the Preferred Alternative and up to 12.7 acres (8.0 acres of construction on existing impermeable surfaces requiring demolition and 4.7 acres of new construction on open space) under Alternative Two would be disturbed by the new facilities. The current impermeable

surface area at NNMC is estimated at approximately 98 acres; the Preferred Alternative and Alternative Two would increase impermeable surface area at NNMC by approximately 3.5 percent and 4.8 percent respectively. Although the Preferred Alternative increases the impermeable surface less than Alternative Two by 1.3 acres, it results in demolishing historic Building 12. For this reason, staff had recommended Alternative Two as the Preferred Alternative.

Transportation

The transportation study conducted in support of EIS evaluated the existing condition as well as the impact of the build alternatives at the NNMC. The analysis was based on the 2,500 additional employees expected on campus as the result of BRAC. The NNMC currently has about 8,000 employees and receives approximately 435,000 visitors a year. It is estimated that upon implementation of total build out of the campus, the number of visitors would increase by 484,000 additional visitors annually. The study recommends mitigation measures to limit the impact of additional traffic generated to the site by employees and visitors.

The US Congress has passed an Omnibus Appropriations bill that includes a \$2 million earmark for a MD 355 corridor study. This funding will be available for studying the MD 355 transportation corridor in the vicinity of NNMC. This funding provides for feasibility studies of the recommended mitigation measures in the area adjacent to NNMC campus.

The State of Maryland has allocated \$45 million for major improvements at four intersections and other transportation improvements in the area. The Navy has requested funding through the Defense Access Road (DAR) program to improve the Naval Hospital's main gates and provide turn lanes at these locations to reduce congestion and queuing on adjacent streets and to possibly provide one kiss and ride lot within the campus. The request for funding also includes financing of the underpass connecting NNMC campus to the Medical Center Metro station. Attachment D contains the FEIS recommendations regarding mitigation of transportation impact. Staff is supporting all these efforts to mitigate BRAC's impact.

The primary staff concern relating to the FEIS recommendations is that the timeframe for coordinating these studies is not yet known, particularly relating to both continuing a robust public outreach process while expediting the decision making and implementation process. Further coordination will be occurring with the Navy, NCPC, and the state, regional and local transportation agencies.

Parking

The new on-campus construction will result in demolishing 700 of the existing parking spaces on campus. The FEIS has recommended an additional 2,500 new parking spaces. Therefore, the proposed development on NNMC campus projects a net increase of 1,800 parking spaces. This combined with remaining existing parking on site provides

approximately 7,923 parking spaces on site. NNMC total future employees on site are estimated at 10,500. This results in a parking space/employee ratio of 1:1.3. This is a high parking space/employee ratio for a site so close to the Metro station and exceeds the NCPC guidelines for parking/employee ratio to encourage mass transportation use. More information will be needed in the Transportation Management Plan regarding the mix of parking spaces dedicated to NNMC employees, visitors, and temporary residents. Staff proposes to continue to pursue this interest in limiting parking to the extent feasible during continuing mandatory referral reviews.

Environmental Impact

The FEIS is providing potential improvement measures for sediment and erosion control, stormwater management, air quality control during construction and noise reduction. For example, they propose to minimize the increase in development runoff and provide grass channels for stormwater management. The Navy's plan for new construction intends for all new buildings to be certified as Silver in Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Program according to the U.S. Green Building Council.

Cultural Resources Measures

The Navy is pursuing formal Section 106 consultation to resolve all adverse effects to historic properties at the future National Naval Medical Center property. The Navy letter of intent and Final Environmental Impact Statement National Naval Medical Center ES-15 Maryland concurrence with the Navy approach is included in Appendix A, Part I.

The Historic Preservation Section would like to commend the Navy for their efforts in designing proposed Buildings A and B so they are sensitive to the adjacent Central Tower Block and environmental setting of the property. The Navy recently completed an evaluation of adaptive reuse for National Register Eligible Building 12, which would be the site of the NICOE™ under the Preferred Alternative. The evaluation determined that adaptive reuse is not practical. Therefore, Section 106 consultation will include an option to demolish Building 12, an adverse effect. The Historic Preservation Section supports the development of a mitigation strategy by the Maryland Historical Trust/Maryland State Historic Preservation Office (MHT/MDSHPO) for the demolition of Building 12 at the property. Under the Preferred Alternative, the Navy will make every attempt to reuse/renovate or mothball Buildings 18 and 21 as part of the 106 consultation process with MHT/MD SHPO. In the event that no reasonable agreement with MHT can be reached for construction and reuse of the area behind building 17, the administrative functions would be located at the current sites of Buildings 53 and 141 and Lot E along with the fitness center and third parking structure. The construction contractors should take measures to control/minimize any visual intrusion the construction staging area will have on the viewshed.

Land Use

Staff notes that while the improvements planned as part of this BRAC were envisioned in the Bethesda/Chevy Chase master plan, they were not expected to take place all at once and this early in the life of the master plan. As the result, pressure may exist to alter land development plans outside of the NNMCMC. However, the State of Maryland has allocated \$45 million to improve transportation system in the area and mitigate the traffic generated by BRAC. The Navy also recognized this concern and requesting funding through the Defense Access Road program to improve their access points, providing turning lanes and possibly providing a direct underground access from the Medical Center Metro on the west side of MD 355 to NNMCMC. These improvements should be sufficient to mitigate BRAC's impact and remove the possibility of altering the land use outside of the campus due to traffic increase.

The potential need for off-campus lodging is a greater concern for the Community-Based Planning staff. The Community Based Planning Staff reiterates its concern regarding the possible need for additional temporary housing in the vicinity of the National Military Medical Center. The Final EIS did not provide any additional information regarding where those not housed on the base would be staying, or how many civilian or military families of those recuperating on the base could be anticipated to need temporary housing. The one sentence that addressed this concern was not a sufficient answer to our concerns. (Page 4-68 "There is believed to be adequate lodging planned or existing on Base for the increased patients and visitors under the Preferred Alternative.")

The staff does not question the rooms provided on the base for patients, but we do not see how the limited rooms available for visiting families or other loved ones visiting the wounded personnel (42 rooms in two new Fisher Houses and an unidentified in size expansion of the Navy Lodge) can provide sufficient housing for the stated 1,860 patients and visitors per day that are anticipated. We will continue to seek additional information so that we can address the need for this type of housing as we make land use and zoning decisions in the Bethesda and North Bethesda areas.

Next Steps

1. The on-site construction timeline is shown in the following table.

Construction Action	2009	2010	2011
Medical Care - New Construction			
Medical Care - Renovation			
Patient, Visitor and Staff Parking			
Warrior Transition Unit			
Administrative Space			
Fitness Center			
NICoE			
BEQ			
Fisher Houses™			

2. *Mandatory Referrals* –The Navy and NCPC have agreed to use the Maryland Department of Planning’s clearinghouse services to distribute plans and seek comments from reviewing agencies for their construction and renovation buildings. We propose to review them administratively; keeping the Board informed of our progress.
3. *The State Highway Administration* transportation study has begun with data collection and the first meeting of state and county agencies involved in the study process is scheduled for May 15, 2008. SHA is expecting that all studies and design of intersection improvements will be complete within two years. However, a more defined schedule will be announced in late May or June of 2008.
4. *WMATA* will be involved with the planning and design of the future underpass connecting the Medical Center Metro station to the NNMC campus. They have done a very preliminary concept plan and estimate a cost of approximately \$20 million to build the underpass. Staff has no definite information on their planning schedule.